

# Goal 10: Local Food

## 1. GOAL AND TARGET

**Long Term Goal #10:** Vancouver will become a global leader in urban food systems.

**2020 Target:** Increase city and neighbourhood food assets by a minimum of 50% from 2010 levels.

**Accountability:** Social Policy, with support from Engineering (Streets) and Parks.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Context

Just as food is central to human existence, resilient local food systems have been central to the sustainability of cities for millennia. In relation to Greenest City Goals, the production, distribution, processing and consumption of food presents one of the single largest sources of greenhouse gas and carbon production though cities don't typically include food in their GHG profile. At the same time, it presents one of the best opportunities to 'green' the planet, create green jobs, and shift towards a more sustainable future. Currently the food production processes that are used to feed Vancouver's 600,000 residents account for about 40% of the city's ecological footprint. By encouraging a more 'local' dimension in food we can start to cut down on the use of fossil fuels, arrest the loss of food producing lands (and related biodiversity), support the local economy and eat food that is healthier and better for us.

There are a number of considerations when advancing the idea of "local food" in Vancouver. Among these are:

1. The complexity of defining "local" food;
2. Considerations affecting the availability of local food to Vancouverites – including questions of traceability, seasonality of production, cost, government jurisdiction and more;
3. Identification of how "local" aligns with other values implicit in the notion of a "just and sustainable food system."
4. Aligning food system actions with the need to reduce overall ecological footprint

Given the many considerations that exist around "local food" it is important for the City to define the term. To that end, the Greenest City focus is on supporting a local food system, where "local" means as close to home as possible. This refers to the geographic distance between growing and consumption of the product. Local is further understood to include products with good inputs, sound labour practices, a low-carbon, non-polluting production regime and affordable products – and with a preference for organic products where available.

Transforming Vancouver into a global leader in urban food systems will mean building on our existing strengths and transforming them into something even better. Vancouver has already demonstrated a willingness to lead the way by being at the front of policy and action in a number of areas. Among the achievements to date:

- Creating a Food Policy Council to act as an arms-length advisory body on food issues (2004)
- Creating and approving a Vancouver Food Charter to underpin the goals of a just and sustainable food system (2007)
- Increasing public involvement in community gardens and community orchards through the 2010 by 2010 Challenge (2007-2010)
- Creating guidelines and bylaw changes to encourage hobby beekeeping (2005) and the keeping of backyard hens (2010)
- Initiating curbside pick-up of food waste – and to take strides in the diversion of food waste from the landfill (2010)

Transforming Vancouver into a global leader will require the idea of “local” to be part of a larger program that includes food that is fairly produced, does not rely on chemicals that harm the planet, and is able to be accessed, on an equitable basis, by Vancouver residents. The Vancouver Food Charter, approved by Council in 2007, calls for the City to enable “a just and sustainable food system for all.” The Charter further advocates that the growing, processing and distribution of healthy food be regionally based, and the aspect of “local” also seen as part of other values including social justice, economic security and environmental sustainability.

## **2.2 Baseline Metrics**

Although some work has been done related to baselines, one of the key challenges is the lack of a comprehensive set of food security indicators that would help to assess progress. Thanks to the Vancouver Food Policy Council and the development of Food Secure Vancouver, an integrated and ongoing review, analysis, and reporting process that monitors the status of Vancouver’s food security, there has been a solid effort made to attend to this gap; however, the availability of trend related data, or data that would facilitate comparisons with other urban centres is still very thin.

In the meantime, three metrics will be used as a composite to measure progress toward the target of increasing neighbourhood food assets.

### **1. Selected Neighbourhood and City-wide Food Infrastructure**

**Assets.** Food assets are defined as resources, facilities, services or spaces that are available to residents of the City (either at the city-wide or neighbourhood scale) and which are used to support the City’s food system, and include:

- Number of food hubs<sup>1</sup>
- Number of community kitchens
- Number of farmers markets

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<sup>1</sup> Facility intended to connect rural supply to urban demand, farmers to people, seller to buyers.

- Number of community produce stands
- Food composting facilities and community composting programs
- Number of community garden plots / orchards
- Number of urban farms

Other variables may also be added to support the long term GCAP goal of developing a just and sustainable urban food system.

Taken in aggregate, the current number of food assets would increase from 3,340 community kitchens, markets, compost facilities, garden plots, orchards, farms and food hubs, to a total of 5,158 - a 54.4% increase from current level in 2010.

*Table 1: 2010 Baseline of Neighbourhood Food Assets in Vancouver*

	<b>November 2010</b>	<b>2020 Goal</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Community Kitchens	69	100	45%
Farmers Markets	4	22	450%
Community Produce Stands	3	15	500%
Community Food Composting facilities	0	5	500%
Garden Plots	3,260	5,000	53%
Community Orchards	3	10	233%
Urban Farms	1	5	400%
Food Hub	0	1	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,340</b>	<b>5,158</b>	<b>54.4%</b>

- 2. Presence and coverage of Neighbourhood Food Networks (NFNs) and opportunities for Vancouverites to benefit from their activities. NFNs are defined as coalitions of community members, community organizations, agencies and businesses who work collaboratively to achieve food system goals, and in so doing, seek to increase overall human capital and community capacity at the neighbourhood scale.**

There are a number of NFNs currently operating in the City of Vancouver, including five that were funded (2010) through the City's Green Grants program. The intent is to ensure that each neighbourhood is serviced by an adequately resourced NFN. Depending on need, this may or may not mean an NFN is present in each local area and could also involve an overarching coordinating body to assist their development. At present, it is unclear how many NFNs will be needed, so a precise target or operational formula has not been proposed.

- 3. Percentage of residents who live within a five minute (400m) walk of a basket of healthy produce.**

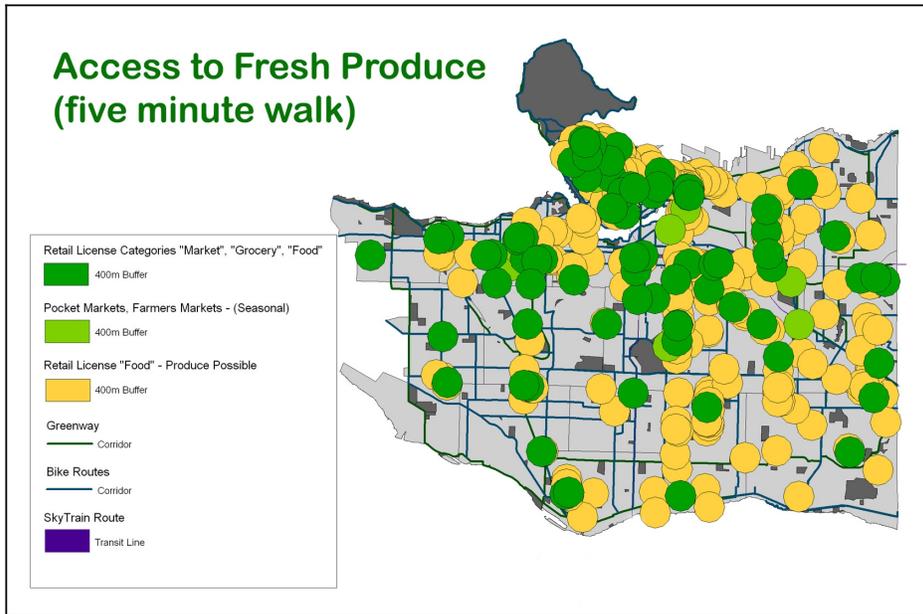


Figure 1: Map showing the 400 metre walking circles around locations currently offering a basket of fresh produce.

This metric is designed to ensure that the majority of Vancouver residents live within a five minute walk of a basket of fresh produce. This is a measure that will require more work to properly define because the availability of this information is, at present, limited and imprecise. Figure 1 shows an estimate of the current distribution of fresh produce retailers throughout the city and includes:

- Large-scale supermarkets (license category "Retailer - Market")
- Small/Medium grocery stores selling produce (license categories "Retailer - Grocery" and "Retailer - Food - Other")
- Green grocers (license category "Retail - Food - Green Grocer")
- Community Produce Stands (seasonal)
- Farmers markets (seasonal)

As illustrated by the map, licensees and market locations can be plotted on a map and buffered with a 400 metre (average 5 minute walk) radius. A total population count of residents inside and outside of the buffered areas will be used as a basis for the metric.

At present, City licensing categories for "Retailer - Market", "Retailer - Grocery" and "Retailer Food - Green Grocer" provide a reasonably accurate picture of stores that sell fresh produce. However, there is a large number of retail outlets licensed as "Retailer - Food - Other" that have not been sufficiently assessed for whether or not they sell a basket of produce (these are represented as yellow dots on the map - "Produce Possible"). Additional research around these outlets is required in order to produce an accurate metric. That being said, the present, limited map does show that there are a number of areas, particularly in the southern half of the city, where access to a basket of fresh produce is well outside of the five minute walk.

## **2.3 Challenges and Opportunities**

There has been considerable growth in interest in the local food movement in recent years; citizens are eager to buy and grow local food. Vancouver has already demonstrated a willingness to develop policy and initiatives that foster and promote local food. Departments will continue to work inter-departmentally to achieve food policy goals.

One of the challenges of building a local food action plan is that base metrics and measures are inconsistent and incomplete. Although some work has been done in this regard, one of the key challenges is the lack of a comprehensive set of food security indicators that would help to assess progress. Thanks to the Vancouver Food Policy Council, there has been a solid effort made to attend to this gap; however the availability of trend related data, or data that would facilitate comparisons with other urban centres is still thin.

## **3. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

### **3.1 Highest Priority Short Term Actions (3 year):**

1. Support urban agriculture by:
  - Creating 5-6 community gardens/yr;
  - Enabling 3 new urban farms;
  - Encouraging 2 new farmers markets;
  - Adding public fruit trees;
  - Investing in 3 neighbourhood food networks and food hub infrastructure
2. Provide local food in City facilities, such as community centres, through the development and implementation of a local food procurement plan.
3. Develop a Municipal Food Strategy.
4. Conduct a comprehensive review of policy and regulatory barriers to growing local food for personal consumption or economic development, and plan to remove barriers.

### **3.2 Strategies and Short- and Medium Term Actions**

**Strategy 1 - Develop a coordinated municipal food strategy.** The City has a strong track record in food policy, but in order to move further and faster towards the long-term goal of becoming a global leader in urban food systems there must be a coordinated municipal strategy to address all aspects of the food system including: production, processing, distribution, access and consumption. There must be a higher degree of coordination between City departments, the Vancouver Food Policy Council, community partners and the various policy programs that currently exist.

#### Short Term (1-3 year) actions:

- Create a local food procurement strategy for all City facilities so that the City, through its purchasing power, can play a substantial role in creating a market for just, sustainable and locally produced food products. When this strategy is sufficiently robust, explore larger scale procurement

strategies with other Vancouver-based institutions, non-profit agencies and Farm to Cafeteria programs;

- Link together the work of Social Policy, Engineering, Parks, Real Estate, other City departments, and community partners to develop an overarching municipal food policy action plan;
- Create an urban agriculture component of the municipal food strategy that will focus on identifying and increasing the amount of cultivatable land and local food related economic activity.

#### Medium Term (3-9 year) actions:

- Create land use policies that make use of rezoning, public benefit, and other regulatory levers to build new food infrastructure, retrofit existing infrastructure or enhance the potential for urban agriculture and food system activities. Actions here could include:
  - a. Establishing dedicated zoning to protect food-growing spaces (including, but not limited to community gardens);
  - b. Supporting appropriate placement and licensing of urban farms;
  - c. Bolstering the role of urban agriculture as a public amenity;
  - d. Amending current bylaws to better facilitate food production, community produce stands, etc.)

**Strategy 2 - Support the creation of food infrastructure and food-related green jobs<sup>2</sup>** related to production, processing, storage, distribution, access and waste management. In order to achieve a sustainable urban food system that is as resilient as possible, a dedicated land base, relevant food infrastructure and necessary labour force needs to be in place. Based on lessons learned in other cities, there are efficient ways to do this that can be linked to the development of food infrastructure.

#### Short Term (1-3 year) actions:

- Ensure that each neighbourhood has, as needed:
  - a. Sufficient emergency food services
  - b. Community kitchens
  - c. A farmers market
  - d. Sufficient community produce stand opportunities to enable better access to healthy produce
  - e. Adequate community garden plots (a rough target of 8 plots/thousand with equitable distribution throughout the city); and, where possible, community orchard space
  - f. Learning opportunities connected with food (e.g. workshops on gardening, food preservation, etc.)
  - g. Storage facilities for foods (community root cellars)
  - h. Community composting facilities
  - i. Other assets as needed (community bread ovens, cold/dry storage facilities, bee keeping, fish processing etc.)
- Support the development of a food related incubator to assist in the establishment of food businesses.

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<sup>2</sup> Types of “green jobs” include: clean technology, green buildings; waste management and recycling; local food; and sustainability services and education.

Medium Term (3-9 year) actions:

- Support the creation of a central Food Hub that can serve as a central food infrastructure asset within the city. A Food Hub would provide space for the assembly, storage and distribution of food from local farms, as well as for the processing and development of local food products.

**Strategy 3 - Ensure that Vancouver's food system is resilient at the neighbourhood level**, and that each Local Area has equitable access to the resources needed to ensure a just and sustainable food system.

Strengthening neighbourhood based food resources will enable more people to access quality local food resources within a few minutes of their home. Neighbourhood networks and neighbourhood food assets work to make strategic linkages between the different food assets in a community while responding to local food security needs. Food networks are further supported by a land use planning that enables and encourages neighbourhood based green grocers and other healthy food resources.

Short Term (1-3 year) actions:

- Develop and implement a plan to grow the number of functional, adequately supported, neighbourhood food networks that are operational in Vancouver so that every Local Area has equitable access to the resources and capacity building opportunities that they provide, and that every resident has the opportunity to participate in neighbourhood-based food network activities.

Medium Term (3-9 year) actions:

- Improve accessibility of residents to green grocers, stores and markets selling a range of produce by:
  - a. reviewing existing retail licensing categories as a means to ensure better information about the availability of fresh produce;
  - b. assessing existing small/medium “food” retailers to determine where fresh produce is being sold;
  - c. determining an appropriate metric and baseline for the proportion of the population residing within a 5 minute walk of a basket of fresh produce;
  - d. reviewing and/or amend zoning and related land-use policy with a view encouraging the development of fresh produce retailers.
- Support the reduction in food waste by:
  - a. strengthening community efforts around food recovery programs that can get surplus edible food to the people that need it; and, where waste does occur;
  - b. developing a program and/or regulatory tools to promote large-scale (commercial) food recovery; and
  - c. promoting neighbourhood-related composting projects to ensure that household food waste does not end up in the landfill.

**Strategy 4 - Support the compilation, brokering and dissemination of information on just and sustainable local food systems.** There are too many good food projects happening in Vancouver and not enough points of connection. Smaller initiatives have a difficult time promoting their work and the City can help with this. Vancouver's Food Policy resources are well recognized in the community and can be enhanced to offer more information to residents, facilitate the building of linkages between different community stakeholders and create clearer and more accessible resources for the community.

Short Term (1-3 year) actions:

- Work with community partners, including the Vancouver Food Policy Council and Neighbourhood Food Networks to develop a directory of key local food initiatives, building on existing information databases; ensure that it is updated regularly, and available in print form at community centres and libraries as well as online and on mobile devices.
- Collect information and data on the city's food related ecological footprint to get a better understanding of where to prioritize food related ecological footprint reduction actions.
- Work with community partners, including Vancouver Coastal Health and other nutritionists to develop materials on nutrient dense, local, just and low carbon healthy eating strategies. This might mean promoting appropriately-sized portions and balanced meals (Food Guide), and reducing commercial and residential over purchase that ends up as waste. Ensure that information emphasizes reducing the food component of the city's ecological footprint.

Medium Term (3-9 year) actions:

- In collaboration with local food agencies, develop a "Food Charter – Seal of Approval" for food products that support the goals of local, low footprint, just and sustainable food system.
- Develop an annual City- or neighbourhood focused "Local Food Festival" or Smaller Footprint Healthy Eating challenge.

**Strategy 5 - Ensure that the City plays a strong advocacy role in promoting food issues at a regional, provincial and national level.** Even though Vancouver has a growing number of local food assets and food resources, the city will continue to be dependent on food grown elsewhere in order to meet the needs of its residents.

Short Term (1-3 year) actions:

- Continue to advocate for maintaining the integrity of food production capacity within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and other agricultural lands with regional and provincial governments, as well as neighbouring municipalities.

Medium Term (3-9 year) actions:

- Promote a "food systems" approach to other levels of government, and support policy that reinforces a coordinated approach to food system planning.

- In concert with other large cities, work to develop a small portfolio of key food system indicators with which local governments can gauge their efforts to promote sustainable food planning.
- In concert with the Vancouver School Board, collaborate to ensure that each neighbourhood has adequately funded and resourced school, daycare and pre-school breakfast, lunch and snack programs.

#### **4. CROSS REFERENCE**

Since food production, distribution and consumption play such a fundamental role, it's not surprising that the goals and objects of local food intersect with other Greenest City Action Plans. The following are some key areas of connection:

**Access to Nature.** This section has identified the need to increase food production through gardens and fruit and nut bearing trees and bushes on both public and private land, an objective that would assist more residents to produce local food and access edible landscaping.

**Lighter Footprint** identifies a variety of activities aimed at reducing Vancouver's ecological footprint. Ecological literacy and education on local food issues, nutrition and consumption choices can be part of this, as can the idea that the City can 'convene and connect' groups working on key issues.

**Green Transportation/Mobility.** This plan devotes attention to goods movement, of which food is a substantial component. Changes to how food is produced and distributed could have a have a positive effect on the movement of food into, out of, and throughout the city.

**Clean Water.** Food production requires access to clean water, but can also be a driver of smart water recycling, rainwater collection and grey water technologies, as well as landscaping practices that encourage crops that are not as water-intensive.

**Green Economy.** The production and processing of local food has the potential to play a key role in meeting the Greenest City target of doubling the number of green jobs. Moreover, a robust local food system will bolster the green economy in the city and region.

**Green Buildings.** There is strong potential for urban agriculture to be better integrated into new buildings, enabling the inhabitants of new residential, commercial and office developments to access local food opportunities via garden plots, green roofs and edible landscaping.

**Climate Change.** The creation of greenhouse gases from food production (carbon inputs) and food waste (i.e. landfill methane) can be addressed by programs that encourage low-carbon food, food-waste diversion and smarter consumption. This will also contribute to the aims set out in the **Clean Air** section.

**Zero Waste.** As discussed in the note on Climate Change, food waste diversion (via composting, or product stewardship initiatives that reduce the amount of food packaging) could assist greatly in making Vancouver the Greenest City.

#### **Other CoV Planning Processes:**

- Municipal Food Strategy
- Revised Community Garden Guidelines
- Revised Beekeeping Guidelines
- Edible Landscaping Guidelines

## 5. EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Joanne Bays	Public Health Association of British Columbia
Brent Mansfield	Vancouver School Board
Doug Aason	Greater Vancouver Foodbank
<a href="#">Daryl Arnold</a>	Commercial poultry farmer
Herb Barbolet	SFU, Centre for Sustainable Community Development and Local Food First
Maria Burglehaus	Vancouver Coastal Health
Carole Christopher	Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC)
Trish Kelly	Horizon Distributors
André LaRivière	Green Table Network
Tara McDonald	Your Local Farmers Market Society
Ross Moster	Village Vancouver
Jeff Nield	Farm Folk City Folk
Cale Price	Vancouver Chef
Janine de la Salle	Food Systems Planning, HB Lanarc
Carla S. Shore	C-Shore Communications Inc.
Yona Sipos	UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems
Helen Spiegelman	Zero Waste Vancouver
Kim Sutherland	BC Ministry of Agriculture
David Tracey	Vancouver Community Agriculture Network (VCAN)
T'Uy'Tanat-Cease Wyss	Skwxw'u7mesh Nation

## 6. STAFF WORKING GROUP

Mary Clare Zak (Chair)	Social Policy
Andrew Pask (Staff Lead)	Social Policy
Wendy Mendes	Social Policy
Brent Toderian	Planning
Tami Gill	Planning
Rick Michaels	Development Services
Sean Pander	Sustainability
John Breckner	Real Estate Services
Scott Edwards	Transportation
Erin McDonald	Transportation
Alan Duncan	Park Board, Research and Planning
Bill Manning	Park Board, Research and Planning
Douglas Scott	Engineering
Kevin Millsip	VSB

## 7. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

### Phase One

There were 53 ideas and 3775 votes submitted for “Encourage local food” on the Talk Green to Us forum. The top five ideas were:

Ideas	Number of Votes
Encourage urban food production	669
Develop a local food hub and expand the availability of local food at a neighbourhood level	509
Develop a city-supported urban farming program	315
Create more community gardens	274
Municipal tax break for property owners that allow urban farmers to farm their yards	256

### Phase Two

- Great deal of support for, and high prioritization of, need to increase food infrastructure and food related green jobs related to production, processing, storage, distribution, access, and waste. Some specific infrastructure mentioned most often includes:
  - urban farms and gardens. Some specific points: rezoning to allow these uses; accessible; connection of cultural communities to farming; donate city-owned land; need for an urban agriculture strategy
  - community meals and community kitchens
  - maintain integrity of land and soil
  - food hub
  - create new, and strengthen, farmers markets and pocket markets
  - composting infrastructure linked to food production
  - food incubator
- Strong support for school programs (as well as other institutions) related to food: healthy school meals; gardening class
- Excited to see that social justice is being integrated into food priorities:
  - accessibility of local, healthy, culturally appropriate foods
  - accessibility of garden space, and of healthy food retailers
  - affordability
- Like to see the strong connections between green economy, food, waste and landscape
- Need for tools, education and resources in collaboration with others (dietitians, teachers, farmers) to build local food systems
- Need to support better land use regionally, and to develop systems to keep food in the region
- In order to succeed, need to find ways to adjust tastes to seasonal produce in culturally sensitive ways

## 8. BASELINE METHODOLOGY

Establishing the baseline of neighbourhood food assets in Vancouver involved integrated methods of data collection. Although some work had been done related to information on neighbourhood food assets, there was a general lack of comprehensive set of indicators that could be used to assess the availability of food assets.

Three broad-level metrics were determined to be valuable measurements in charting success of the Action Plan.

First, the measure of “neighbourhood and city-wide food infrastructure assets” was identified as a strong aggregate metric that could be created out of existing sub-indicators. To do this, staff – in consultation with internal and external stakeholders – developed a definition of “food asset” – a concept that was linked to “the resources, facilities, services or spaces that support the City’s food system.” Following this, inventory data from a set of measurable city-wide assets was compiled from various sources (including 2010-Challenge Community Garden data, City grant data bases, and input from community partners). This information was then used as a baseline from which a series of estimate/projections were made as to the potential increases in infrastructure that seemed possible given strong civic policy support, a mixture of investment sources, and current community trends. These estimates were validated via interviews with City staff, the Vancouver Food Policy Council, key community informants, coordinators of community gardens and community food programs.

Second, the presence and coverage of Neighbourhood Food Networks was determined as a strong organizational measure that would support Greenest City goals. Neighbourhood Food Networks work collaboratively in neighbourhoods to achieve food system objectives and are typically comprised of a coalition of community members, community organizations, agencies and business. At the time of developing the goal five formally funded Neighbourhood Food Networks were operating in various neighbourhoods and other informal networks were planned and/or in development. Interviews with the Network coordinators were conducted to assess the levels and locations of their activities and to assess neighbourhood gaps.

Third, the percentage of residents who live within a five minute (400m) walk of a basket of healthy produce involved determining the licensees and locations of retail outlets that sell – or could sell – a mixture of fresh produce. The first step was to compile existing City of Vancouver business license permits in the categories of large-scale supermarkets, Retail-grocery, Retail-Produce and “Retail-other.” The latter category – because it includes a wide range of outlets (from convenience stores through to small gas station kiosks) required a visual review and assessment of each store – and a staff assessment of the likelihood that produce was being sold). Additional layers were added to the map identifying community produce stands, and farmers markets. Point data for all locations were mapped, and a buffer of 400 m was drawn around each to assess the five minute walking distance. Further study

is needed to determine the percentage of people living within the buffer areas.

The Local Food indicators provide a snapshot of the infrastructure and networks that are already established that support and enhance local food goals. The indicators will provide a measurement overtime to track success of the local good goals; however, there are still areas of further research needed and indicators that are not featured in the three broad-level measurements. Local Food activities can have multiple benefits such as skill building, green employment, and urban greening which are not captured in the measurement. The qualitative aspects of local food, such as the knowledge, capacity and social capital among citizens, also requires further attention to more fully capture the impacts of the Local Food Action Plan.